Okanagan Region

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

March, 2003

for **Pennask Creek**
Protected Area

Ministry of Water, Lan
and Air Protection
Environmental
Stewardship Division

Pennask Creek
Protected Area

Forward and Approvals Page

Forward

Pennask Creek Protected Area was set aside to protect the spawning/rearing habitat of an internationally significant wild rainbow trout population. Pennask Creek is considered to be one of the most important rainbow trout producing streams in the province, providing an extremely valuable source of eggs for the Provincial Fish Culture Program.

Approvals

_____ Date:_____

Drew Carmichael
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division

_____ Date:_____

Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

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Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

A Management Direction Statement (MDS) provides strategic management direction for a protected area. A MDS also describes protected area values, management issues and concerns, a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies, and direction statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the development and implementation of all these strategies is subject to funding. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the protected area is subject to the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy.

This MDS was developed through direction received from the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (OSLRMP), as well as comments from government staff, stakeholders and interest groups.

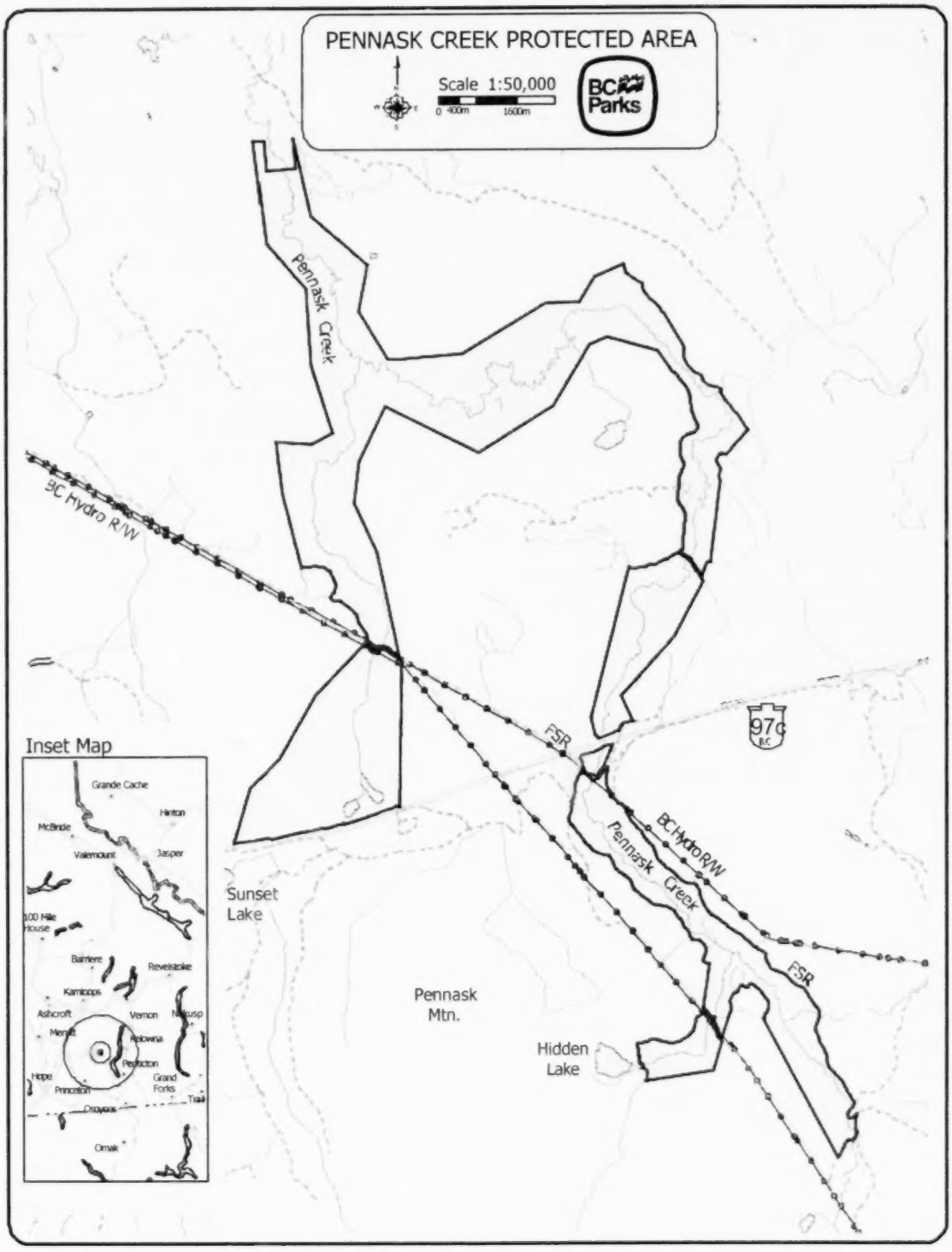
Setting and Context

The provincial Protected Areas Strategy provided the framework for identifying areas that would contribute towards ecological representation within the province. As part of that strategy, the provincial government undertook many strategic level regional planning initiatives throughout the province. The Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan is the regional land use plan that pertains to the Pennask Creek Protected Area. The OSLRMP concluded that a number of protected areas should be established to protect natural, cultural heritage and/or recreational values. The Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP Table used the Protected Areas Strategy as a guide in the selection of protected areas and in providing directions for their management.

Pennask Creek was recommended by the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan in 2000 and established as a protected area by Order in Council under the *Environment and Land Use Act* on April 18, 2001. The *Park Act* and associated regulations apply as if the protected area is a Class A provincial park. The intent is to redesignate the area as a Class A park in the future. The protected area is located approximately 50 kilometres west of Kelowna in the Thompson Plateau of southern British Columbia. The Pennask Creek Protected Area covers an area of approximately 1,245 hectares.

The area was set aside to protect critical spawning/rearing habitat of an internationally significant rainbow trout population. Pennask Creek is one of the most important rainbow trout rearing streams in the province.

The creek is an extremely important egg source for the provincial fish culture program. Environmental Stewardship Division has an egg collection station consisting of a cabin and permanent fish collection fence. Each spring provincial fish culture staff collect eggs from the spawning run which ranges in size from 15,000 to 25,000 adults. These eggs are reared in provincial trout hatcheries and released into hundreds of small lakes


PENNASK CREEK PROTECTED AREA
Scale 1:50,000
0 400m 1600m
BC Parks
Pennask Creek
BC Hydro R/W
FSR
97C
BC Hydro R/W
Pennask Creek
FSR
Sunset Lake
Pennask Mtn.
Hidden Lake
Inset Map
Grande Cache
Hinton
McBride
Valemount
Jasper
100 Mile House
Barriere
Revelstoke
Kamloops
Ashcroft
Vernon
Merritt
Kelowna
Penticton
Hope
Princeton
Grand Forks
Osoyoos
Omak

throughout the province. The Pennask Creek egg collection forms the backbone of the provincial stocking program.

Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

- Situated in the Southern Thompson Upland Ecosection
- Pennask Creek contains portions of two biogeoclimatic zones: Montane Spruce -very dry/cool (MSxk), and the Montane Spruce - dry/mild (MSdm2)
- Tree species include *Abies lasiocarpa* (Alpine Fir - Balsam), *Picea engelmannii* (Engelmann spruce), and *Pinus contorta* (Lodgepole pine)

BEC Variant	BEC variant in Province (ha)	Hectares of BEC variant in existing protected areas	% of BEC variant in existing protected areas	Hectares of BEC variant protected in Pennask Creek	% of BEC variant in protected areas system protected in Pennask Creek	% of provincial occurrence within PA
MSxk	547,934	36,843	6.7%	1,166	3.2%	0.2
MSdm2	353,737	12,736	3.6%	44.4	0.3%	0.0

- Incorporates both branches of Pennask Creek for 50 - 400 metres either side of mid-stream
- Pennask Creek supports a provincially significant wild rainbow trout. In May and June of each year, approximately 15,000 to 25,000 wild rainbow trout move up from Pennask Lake to spawn in Pennask Creek
- Provincially significant egg source for the provincial fish culture program. Each year, two million eggs are removed from 10% of the spawning female trout and sent to a hatchery in Summerland to be raised. Once raised, these fish are then used for stocking rainbow trout throughout the province.
- One known record of a rare vascular plant, *Salix boothii,* (blue listed) has been found within the protected area

Recreation / Tourism

- The recreational/tourism opportunities of the Pennask Creek Protected Area are associated with the spawning cycle of the rainbow trout. Restricted to pre-arranged visits due to conservation and public safety concerns
- Pennask Creek and its tributaries are closed to recreational fishing throughout the year

Cultural Heritage

- There are four known archaeological sites within the protected area

Education and Research Role

- Pennask Creek Protected Area provides an excellent opportunity to promote the need to protect wild fish stocks and their spawning habitat, study of the life cycle of rainbow trout from spawn, to hatch, to maturing down stream in Pennask Lake, and return trip up Pennask Creek to spawn.

Significance in the Protected Area System

- Protects critically important spawning habitat for rainbow trout. Pennask Creek is believed to be one of the most important spawning areas for this species in the province.
- Part of the Southern Thompson Upland Ecosection. This ecosection is poorly represented (1.62%) within the provincial protected area system. Pennask Creek Protected Area contributes approximately 6% of the overall representation of this ecosection.
- Provides the opportunity for pre-arranged, low-intensity fish viewing/educational visits

Other Land Uses and Interests

Access

- Pennask Creek Protected Area is bisected by Highway 97C. Sunset Lake Forest Service Road also passes through the protected area. In addition, several old logging roads and skid tracks criss-cross throughout the protected area
- The main point of access to the protected area is from the Bear Creek Forest Service Road

Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

All existing liens, charges, and encumbrances other than those applying to commercial logging, mining or energy exploration and development, will continue to be authorized through issuance of park use permits (PUPs). This policy recognizes all existing *Land Act* tenures, special use permits (SUPs), water rights, trapping licenses and other legal tenures and rights.

Existing tenures within the protected area:

- One trap line
- Two BC Hydro utility corridor right-of-ways bisect the protected area (through the west arm of site 1, and through the north end of site 3)
- Two grazing tenures are partially within the protected area

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Forest harvesting activities occur on the lands in the vicinity and adjacent to the protected area
- Gorman Industries has planned forest harvesting activities in the vicinity of the protected area over the next 1 - 5 years
- Extensive cattle grazing occurs on lands bounding the protected area

Aboriginal Interests

- Interests of the Okanagan First Nations are unknown

Other Agency Interests

- Ministry of Forests for maintenance of Forest Service roads, management of grazing tenures, and assists in the management of forest health issues (mountain pine beetle). There are no concerns within the protected area at present.
- Ministry of Forests, Protection Branch manages wildfire responses on behalf of the Environmental Stewardship Division

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

Private Interests:

- Grazing licenses that overlap the protected area

Public interests:

- Nature viewing
- Nature conservation and ecosystem management (non-government groups and organizations)
- Fire management for ecosystem health and protection of adjacent private holding protection

Role of Pennask Creek Protected Area

The primary role of Pennask Creek Protected Area is to protect wild stocks of rainbow trout and their critically important spawning habitat. The focus for management within the protected area is for conservation values associated with the rainbow trout. A secondary role is to provide pre-arranged educational tours.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction From Previous and Ongoing Planning

The Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) recommended establishment of the protected area with logging, mining and energy exploration and development prohibited. The LRMP provided statements of management direction that have been incorporated into the management direction statement.

Management Issues

The following table lists specific issues, by theme, requiring management action:

Theme	Issue
Protecting Natural Values	• Impact of grazing activities in and around the riparian zone on fish habitat • Impact from logging and road building activities on fish habitat (siltation of spawning beds, blow down of trees into creek beds, alteration of water flows and or water temperatures) • Need to develop a vegetation management strategy to deal with forest fire and forest health (e.g. mountain pine beetle) • Need to identify strategies on how to ensure ecological integrity of the protected area is maintained • Impact of recreational activities on rainbow trout habitat and spawning activities
Protect Cultural Values	• Lack of knowledge on cultural values • How will the cultural values of the protected area be protected
Visitor Information / Interpretation	• How to relay to the public the importance of Pennask Creek Protected Area for the protection of the rainbow trout fishery
First Nations Values	• Unknown First Nations information on the area • Need for enhanced communication with First Nations concerning their interests in the protected area

Management Direction

Management Objectives and Strategies

The following table lists specific strategies, by theme, to achieve management objectives:

Objective	Strategy
Protect natural values	• Develop a rainbow trout spawning habitat management strategy in consultation with adjacent land managers • Develop grazing management strategy in consultation with the Ministry of Forest district range officers, and with the grazing tenure licensee to minimize damage to the riparian area • Undertake inventories of the natural values (flora and fauna) • Work with the Ministry of Forests and forest companies to minimize the potential of wind throw resulting from forest harvesting activities on land adjacent to the protected area • Develop a vegetation management strategy to deal with issues of forest health (forest fire, disease and mountain pine beetle infestation) with the objective of maintaining the quality of the spawning habitat
Manage Recreational Values	• Work with the Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Transportation to maintain appropriate road access to the protected area. Close/gate non-status roads not required. Construct no additional roads except if required for fish management purposes • Access may be restricted at certain times of the year to protect the rainbow trout fishery

	• Maintain a sport fishing closure on Pennask Creek; • Do not issue an angling guide license that includes the protected area • No new facilities except those required for fish management purposes
Manage Cultural Values	• Undertake an overview assessment of the cultural values and determine if a detailed management strategy is needed
Provision of Visitor Information	• Provide information to visitors on the importance of the area for the rainbow trout (spawning activities, life cycle, fisheries management activities)
First Nations	• Work with the local First Nations to determine their traditional use and interest in the protected area and develop strategies to manage these interests

Integration with Other Land Use Planning Processes

This management direction statement, future management direction statements, and all resulting management actions will follow the intent and criteria set out by the Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP for the Pennask Creek Protected Area. Management of the protected area should be coordinated with land management of other levels of government, including First Nations, and other compatible stakeholders in the area. This would be done within the confines of the *Park Act* and BC Parks' Conservation Program Policies.

Consultation and Future Planning

The Environmental Stewardship Division will continue to consult with local groups to determine promotion, information and volunteer strategies. Also, the Environmental Stewardship Division will work with the appropriate Okanagan First Nations to further determine heritage and cultural values and strategies to manage these interests. Future planning will not compromise the ecological integrity of natural or cultural values within the protected area, especially where there are species or communities that are considered at risk in the province. Integrated planning with other agencies, adjacent land managers and interest groups will ensure ecosystem integrity and promote long-term stewardship of the area.

Zoning Plan

The entire protected area is zoned as *Special Feature* to protect the importance of the protected area for rainbow trout. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values. Recreational use levels will be kept at low levels for pre-arranged interpretation and educational visits. Access will be restricted during certain times of the year to protect the rainbow trout spawning habitat.

Appendix I – Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities – Pennask Creek Protected Area

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional activities and uses	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	N
Trapping	N2
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N2
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N2
Communication Sites	N
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	N
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	N
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	N
Guide Outfitting (river rafting)	N
Cat-Assisted Skiing	N
Ski Hills	N
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	N
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N1
Road Access	Y
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	N
Motorized Water Access	N
Aircraft Access	N
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	Y
Fire Management (prevention)	Y
Forest Insect/Disease Control	M
Noxious Weed Control	M
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	M
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	M

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed